

Remarks

Reconsideration of the instant application is requested in light of the amendments and remarks presented herein.

I. Status of the Claims and Specification

Claims 9 and 11-13 are now pending. Claims 9 and 11 have been rewritten in independent format and amended to include all limitations of the claims from which they depended previously. New claim 13 is directed to ferrules comprising essentially all the limitations of original claim 11, and further comprising a movement regulating means comprising a convex portion. Support for such new claim can be found, for example, in Figs. 2(b) and 4.

The specification has been amended to reflect standard U.S. format. No new matter has been added.

II. Correction of the Indicated Application Filing Date

Upon review of the Examiner's Office Action dated December 26, 2003 ("the Office Action"), applicants have recognized an error in the reporting of the filing date for the instant application. In particular, applicants note that the application was originally filed on, and duly assigned, a filing date of October 29, 2001. (See, Original Filing Receipt mailed February 27, 2002). After applicants provided a proper and complete reply to the Notice to File Missing Parts mailed from the U.S.P.T.O. on February 27, 2002, the filing date was incorrectly reported as "September 03, 2002" on all subsequent documents mailed from the U.S.P.T.O., including the current Office Action.

Applicants respectfully submit that the correct filing date for the instant application is October 29, 2001. A request for a corrected filing receipt, indicating the October 29, 2001 filing date is being filed on even date herewith (a copy is attached hereto).

III. The Examiner's Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are Rendered Moot

The Examiner rejected claims 7, 8, and 10 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Luther et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,305,850) in view of Tanaka et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,862,280).

In reply, although applicants do not agree with the Examiner's rejections, such rejections are nevertheless rendered moot in light of the amendments made herein. In particular, claims 7, 8, and 10 have been canceled, without prejudice. Accordingly, the Examiner's rejections should be withdrawn.

IV. Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner indicated that claims 9, 11, and 12 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of any base, and intervening, claims.

In reply, applicants thank the Examiner for a finding of allowable subject matter. Applicants have amended claims 9, 11, and 12 as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, such claims should be allowed.

V. New Claim 13

New claim 13 is directed to a ferrule defined by all the limitations already found allowable for ferrules of original claim 11, and further comprising a movement regulating means consisting of a convex portion. Claim 13 is clearly allowable for the same reasons that claim 11 has been found to be allowable. Accordingly, claim 13 should be allowed.

VI. CONCLUSION

Reconsideration is respectfully requested. In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is urged that the present application be allowed. An early and favorable response is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted

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